important part of bio-diversity. Ministry of Environment and Forests are also implementing a scheme of conservation and *in-situ* cultivation. A Medicinal Plants Board has also been set up to look into all matters regarding availability of medicinal plants and coordinate activities to augment their production including *in-situ* conservation.

Exploiting the knowledge about genome by terrorists

819. SHRI LAJPAT RAI: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that gene terrorists can cause havoc by exploiting the knowledge about genome and create and agent far more devastating than Anthrax;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the details of Anthrax cases detected in India; and

(d) the remedial measures Government propose to take to contain Anthrax cases?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C.P. THAKUR):

(a) and (b) Knowledge about genome can facilitate modification of characteristics of any bacteria / virus to make it more deadly. There are several examples where such changes have taken place naturally like E.Coli 0157:H7, Vibrio Cholerae 0139 and a virulent clone of V. Parahaemolyticus strain comprising of 03 :K6,04:K 68 and 01 :K25 serovars. Similar modifications of other organisms are within the realm of possibility.

(c) Natural Anthrax is endemic in some parts of the country. The data available with National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) is given below:—

States	1999		2000		2001	
	Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths
Karnataka	8	5	Nil		4	2
West Bengal	Nil		43	3	Nil	

(d) A Statement is attached. [Refer to the Statement appended to the answer to Unstarred Question No. 797 Part (a) and (b)]